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ABSTRACT

A study conducted in Guadalajara, Mexico assessed Mexican attitudes toward United States bilingual education. Subjects interviewed were 129 English-speaking Mexicans, aged from 12 to 66, most of them middle class. Forty percent were students. The interviews focused on the subjects' backgrounds, why and how they learned English, and how Mexican students in the United States can learn English best. Questions in the last category addressed three issues: how a Mexican student can learn English quickly, how long it should take to learn enough English to understand the teacher, and how the dilemma of few Spanish-speaking teachers for the large numbers of Spanish-speaking students should be resolved. The findings are summarized and illustrated with excerpts from the responses. All felt that Mexican students in the United States should begin learning English immediately. Only one respondent favored bilingual education, with most preferring English-only instruction. Many spoke of the parents' role in encouraging language practice, and of the importance of personal effort. Practice was also commonly cited as an important method of learning. A variety of opinions about teacher qualifications were expressed. Overall, majority opinions about English language learning and instruction were shared by the 19 respondents in the group who were teachers experienced in immersion education. (MSE)

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A STUDY OF MEXICAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS
LEARNING AND TEACHING ENGLISH

by

Charles H. Slaughter Ed.D.

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Irma Martinez, of San Luis Potosi, is a special person. She typifies the emerging young Mexican professional woman. I have never worked with anyone more tireless, diligent, inventive, and resourceful. We learned so very much from her.

Olive Slaughter is an educational psychologist and also my wife. Her initial interviews at the Instituto Cultural literally opened the doors for finding subjects and locating the other interviewers.

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BACKGROUND

The Bilingual Education Act prompted this study. In 1968, while superintendent of schools in Santa Paula California, I authored the first approved Title VII proposal in California. Santa Paula was the first California applicant. The non-English speaking Mexican parents in Santa Paula had been meeting with me and a few of my staff telling us what they hoped the schools would do to help their children. Their concerns were instrumental in developing the proposal. In 1968 there were no official "Bilingual Education Specialists" so we called on Hispanic educators to help us. From the beginning it seemed to me that the Hispanic professionals had different ideas about bilingual education than the parents. From mid 1968 until mid 1984 I was involved, one way or another, with bilingual education. Throughout that time I never saw a reconciliation between the Mexican parent views and the "experts'" opinion. Were these anglo parents you can rest assured that their opinions would be recognized and felt in the schools. Minority parent views are often not directly sought. Instead, politicians rely on middle-men's reports. Anyone familiar with the "Patron" syndrome will recognize how appropriate such reporting is to working class Mexican culture.

In my teens I lived in Cananea, Sonora, Mexico and I always wanted to move back to Mexico. I'm very comfortable there. In July, 1984 I moved to Guadalajara to enjoy life and write a book. I also developed this study proposal; recruited, directed, and

paid the interviewers; transcribed all the taped interviews;
hired the data analyst. I am responsible for what appears here.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching English in Mexico is a big education business. Satellite antennas are advertised as a sure fire method for learning English. The Guadalajara yellow pages contain 133 listings for schools that teach English. American visitors are approached continuously by Mexicans who want to practice their English.

Teaching Spanish to Americans is a small Mexican business enterprise, even though thousands of Americans live in Mexico and thousands more go there every year. Mexican public schools have no program for their handful of American students. Mexican public school curriculum includes a courses in English for all students, but the courses aren't well executed. Medical schools offer their American students crash Spanish courses in the summer. Large Mexican cities have an Instituto Mexicano Norteamericano de Relaciones Culturales (Instituto) where Spanish classes may be offered to a few dozen Americans but English classes enroll a few thousand Mexicans.

Thousands of Mexican parents pay high tuition to insure their children an English language education. They are not paying for bilingual education, or English as a Second Language (ESL) programs, they are buying English language immersion. By the time such children leave kindergarten all instruction is in English. Wealthier Mexicans regularly send their teen-agers to the United States for six months to a year for the sole purpose of learning English. In recent years, some of these teen-agers have found

themselves in U.S. bilingual education programs, and they feel cheated.

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

I moved to Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1984, to direct a study of Mexican attitudes toward U.S. bilingual education. The final interviews were completed in 1985. The study data analysis was completed in 1987. English speaking Mexican citizens were interviewed, 129 in all. Some subjects are extremely wealthy, a few are poor. Eighty percent of the subjects are middle class, with an average age of twenty-seven (age range: twelve to sixty-six).

Forty percent of the interviewees were students at the Guadalajara Instituto Cultural. Three interviewers came from there. Another forty percent were identified through one of three U.S. style schools in the city, "The American School," "Lincoln School," and "John F. Kennedy School." The remaining subjects were interviewed in several Mexican cities, including Guadalajara, Mexico City, San Luis Potosi, and Oaxaca.

The first series of interviews in this study were conducted at the Guadalajara Instituto Cultural. It is housed in a somewhat tattered two story building on Avenida Tolsa, near the western edge of the downtown section of the city. This Instituto, and similar institutions in other Mexican cities, grew from a joint Mexican-U.S. project which began more than twenty years ago.

The Instituto was a logical place to begin because its

primary function is teaching English. Classes start at seven in the morning continuing until ten at night. Approximately 2,000 students are enrolled at any given time, one hundred of these are Americans learning Spanish. Mexican students pay tuition equal to \$60.00 U.S. Americans write checks on U.S. banks (no divers license or check guarantee card required).

Dr.Otto, Director of the Guadalajara Instituto Cultural, is a former American college professor who came to Mexico several years ago with his Mexican wife. He worked at Universidad de Guadalajara before becoming the Instituto Director.

The Instituto hires American teachers to teach English classes whenever possible. Other English language schools do the same. These days there aren't many American teachers available because fewer American medical students are in Mexican medical schools today. The result is fewer American wives to fill teaching positions. Teacher pay is terrible: about a dollar-fifty an hour. (The Guadalajara American School pays much better than this, but even their salaries are low compared with U.S. salary schedules). All of these schools want people with formal teacher training, but it isn't mandatory for the positions.

Six interviewers interviewed a total of 129 people. Three interviewers are Mexican, three American; more than half the interviews were conducted by the Mexican interviewers.

The interviews focused on three topics:

First, Each subjects background.

Second, why, and how, they learned English.

Third, how Mexican students in the U.S. can best learn English.

Each interview lasted between 40 and 90 minutes. Responses went beyond "computer convenient" answers to get a greater depth of response, and to better understand what these people had to say. Without exception, respondents were forthright and helpful. They were told that their answers would be shared with people in the United States for the purpose of helping students and teachers. The experiences, beliefs, and feelings, the respondents have for learning the English language are given here in both tabulated form and individual statements. Their words carry messages of far greater importance than mere numbers.

What follows is a report of the findings.

PART ONE

RESPONDENTS' BACKGROUNDS:

The group's socio-economic level was above average:
with 1 = low, and 5 = high

level	#	level	#	level	#	level	#	level	#
1	= 1	2	= 18	3	= 59	4	= 40	5	= 7

The respondents associate English competency with
educational, professional, and economic success.

1. Twelvepercentcompleted,orenrolled, ingraduate school.
- 2.Thirty-three percent are in,or have finished, college.
3. Thirty-nine percent have a high school education.
4. Fourteen percent completed only junior high.
5. Two percent haveanelementary leveleducation.
6. Thirty-six percent are students.
7. Fifteen percent are teachers
8. Twenty-twopercent are "otherprofessional".
9. Elevenpercent are housewives.
10. Sixteen percent are whiteandbluecollarworkers.

Occupations List:

Student	46	36%	Attorney	2	1.5%	Psychologist	1	.5%
Teacher	19	15%	Trustee	2		Bookkeeper	1	
Secretary	13	10%	Designer	2		Waiter	1	
Housewife	11	9%	Chemist	2		Guide	1	
Engineer	7	5.4%	Aide	2		Dentist	1	
Physician	6	5%	Sales	2		Librarian	1	
Business	4	3%	Architect	2		Beautician	1	
						Public Relations	1	

Mexico has an imbalance of professionally educated people in proportion to the number of professional jobs available. English competency is a way to set yourself apart and above the competition. Often, this is not enough. The wife of a cardiologist said her husband cannot make enough money to buy a house, so she sells women's clothing in offices.

Several people talked with us about professional unemployment in Mexico. Ninety percent of Mexico's doctors are unemployed. Many doctors have only two patients per week. The average Mexican cannot afford a private doctor, and goes to the socialized medical services.

Eighty-five percent of Mexican University graduates do not get jobs in their field of study. The majority of them want to go to the States and get a job using their education. The middle class differs from the working class Mexican in this regard. The workers only want to go for a short time to get money, then return. Many middle class Mexicans hope to settle permanently

and legally in the United States.

Mexican university professors have between 35 and 40 student contact hours per week, versus fifteen per week in the States. A Mexican professor earns the equivalent of \$450.00 U.S. per month. Given the low pay and over-work of Mexican teachers, motivated students know they must assume responsibility for their own education. They have to go beyond the instructional program that is offered.

PART TWO

WHY AND HOW THEY LEARN ENGLISH:

Mexican motivation to learn English may lie buried in the words of the former dictator, Porfirio Diaz: "Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the United States."

While Americans often take their country's size and power for granted, the rest of the world does not.

Eighty-six percent of the respondents learned English to promote their careers and expand career opportunities. They had to. Virtually all Mexican graduate school textbooks in scientific, technical, and professional fields are in English. Many undergraduate textbooks are written in English as well. Only a few said they have special talent for learning languages.

"Learning English was my golden dream, I like it. Most of my engineering books are in English. Most of the people who go

to the U.S. only go to make money and they speak Spanish, especially California." (Alfredo Sandoval, college student).

"I want to progress. Here in Mexico it is very difficult to earn good money. It's for the money, my reason for learning English," (Jose Luis Godinez, university student).

Frank Bolek owns a business machine company in Guadalajara. He was international sales vice president with a major U.S. corporation. He earned a degree in economics from UCLA. He described his career this way:

"First, I had to become one of the crowd, then stand out in the crowd. I knew I wanted to be in international sales and I changed my name to Frank from Francisco, because I knew that they would not want to call me Pancho in the executive suite."

Travel was cited as an important reason for learning English. Seventy percent of the respondents had spent some time in the United States, ranging from a few weeks to several years. Los Angeles was named as a city where a Spanish speaking person can get along easily without ever learning English. This wasn't always appreciated by the Mexican visitors because when it come to serious matters English in the United States is THE language.

Virtually all the respondents hold the United States in the highest regard. Even the son of a wealthy Mexican industrialist, one who had known American bigots first hand during his American school experience, kept his admiration for the United States. Had the admiring comments been spoken only to the American

interviewers a reasonable suspicion of sincerity would exist. This was not the case. Some of the most flattering statements about America, and Americans, were spoken by one Mexican to another.

"It is not a very difficult problem to adjust to the U.S. For example: the busses are clean, lots of seats, and the way to pay is much different. That's the way things are up there." (Rafael Burrillo, university student).

"The U.S. is the largest country in the world, our neighbor, and we must learn to live together. We like the country, its culture, its people. Last century it was French when France was the focus of the world. Movies and tv give us contact with the US. When I go to the US I like it so much, I feel so comfortable. I know my English is limited, but in the future I will improve it." (Felipe Delfin, international lawyer).

It is easy to draw a conclusion from our daily media barrage that the United States has no friends in the world. Richard Morefelde, U.S. General Consule in Guadalajara (when the interviews were underway) said, "Most Mexicans have an accurate view of the United States, except those in government; most Americans have a distorted view of Mexico."

"The American government has a bad way with people who speak Spanish, they are complacent about people speaking Spanish. I don't know why the government does that, all the advertisements and all the signs in Spanish. Maybe the

government should make a rule for all people that it is necessary to speak English." (Jose Luis Godinez, university student).

"Learning English was a love of mine. It is necessary today because they speak English in every country." (Claudia Hernandez, bilingual secretary).

American tourists, in Mexico, get little language help as they struggle with Customs officials (Aduano). Bilingual signs are few. However, the Mexican government makes a commendable effort to promote good relations between Mexicans citizens and U.S. tourists. Such government action coincides with this study's respondent's concern for personal feelings.

The following is a tabulation of reasons that motivated the respondents to learn English:

111 individuals responded, multiple responses were accepted		
better job/ career	72	65%
more education	45	40.5%
travel	26	23%
personal/ improve my English	9	8%
parenting	9	8%
do something for Mexico	7	6%
make money	6	5%

Mexico's Certified Schools (those with a government license, both public and private schools) are technically required to teach English. However, they do not have the resources. English may be used in non state exam courses, like art and P.E.

Middle class Mexicans will send their children to the U.S. over holidays and vacation to learn English. Wealthier Mexicans send their children to U.S. boarding schools.

The chief of police in Puerto Vallarta refused an offer from the U.S. Consulate to teach English to his officers (an aid to American tourists) because he was sure they would quit the force to take better paying jobs in the hotels, as bellmen. A valid argument.

Each respondent told us how he, or she, had learned English. Here is a tabulation of their responses:

128 individuals responded, multiple responses were accepted.

in school	65	51%
time in the U.S.	55	43%
Instituto / private tutor	53	41%
family / friends	26	20%
television	9	7%
radio / cassettes / music	8	6%
movies	4	3%
newspapers / books	6	4%

WHAT HELPED RESPONDENTS LEARN ENGLISH:

Respondents named the things that helped them the most when they were learning English. Many people mentioned popular media as an important contributor to their learning English.

"The movies and the tv motivated me." (Eduwiges Elizande, teacher).

"I was around it in the U.S., tv and radio are most important because they are part of the U.S." (Humberto Gallegos, Dentist).

"You can learn it everywhere in the United States, schools, movies, museums." (Felipe Delfin, trustee at the American School, International Lawyer).

"Movies helped me the most, and I tried to speak it every time I had the chance, helping people who were lost or trying to buy something. I tried to translate Nat King Cole records." (Jorge Haro, corporate public relations man).

"I think trying to learn the Beatle songs helped me most." (Patrick Hutter, sixth grade student at JFK School).

"I like American music and I learned to translate words using the dictionary, that is how I learned vocabulary." (Alicia Gonzales M.D. pediatrician).

TEACHERS:

Mexican students praise their U.S. trained teachers in words few American teachers ever hear: praised for their caring attitude, their superior teaching methods, and their subject matter expertise.

Jose Luis Godinez, a young university student, made this observation about teachers:

"The teachers who have studied teaching are the best. Good ones know how to listen and they know you learn; the poor ones only see the lesson."

Graciella Trujillo, age twenty-one, plans to become a teacher. She is a university education student, She said:

"I always appreciated Mrs. Cannon, (teacher at the Instituto). She always did what she thought would help us learn English. She used many materials and equipment."

Maria Gonzales said, "My teacher being so nice to me is what helped me." Maria is twenty-three and a kindergarten teacher. She went to elementary school in the States for one year.

This following is a tabulation of what they said about what helped them most when they were learning English:

124 individuals responded, multiple responses were accepted.

Type of Help	#	%
practice / talking	50	41%
teacher(s)	34	27%
in U.S. / Engl immersion	30	24%
forced to learn	26	21%
listening	24	19%
friends / family	19	15%
reading	18	14.5%
media of any kind	18	14.5%
formal study	15	12%
self motivated	9	7%
writing	2	1.5%

ENGLISH IN THEIR FUTURES:

The respondents told us what their knowledge of English would mean to their futures. This is how they answered the question, "What will your English skills mean in your future?":

129 individuals responded, multiple responses accepted.

better job/ career	69	53%
further education	47	36%
travel	45	35%
personal interest	26	20%
uncertain	10	8%
more money	6	5%

PART THREE

MEXICAN STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH IN THE U.S.:

Each person answered the following three questions:

1. How can a Mexican student in U.S. school learn English quickly?
2. How long would it take a Mexican student, in a U.S. school, to learn enough English to understand the teacher?
3. There are thousands of Spanish speaking students in U.S. schools, and only a few U.S. teachers speak Spanish; what suggestions do you have that would help these students learn English?

All subjects agreed that a student's English language instruction should begin immediately. Virtually every respondent said something about taking student feelings into account. Not everyone agreed on what should be done about student feelings, but it is worth noting that the topic was universally addressed.

STUDENT FEELINGS:

The Respondents said they admire and respect the United States. As for Mexican boys and girls who go to American schools, they feel that schools should try to understand children's feelings.

Mrs. De Blancarte, attractive, thirty-five years old, enrolled her two children in Guadalajara's American School.

Later, she became a school trustee. She grew up in and around the communications business. Her family owns many radio stations.

This is what she said:

"Many students are made to feel inferior and that is very bad for them. I don't know what they do (the school people), but I have that feeling. Maybe it is in the boy or girl, but it would help to let them know they are not inferior. Children want to be equal.

"Mexicans are very secure in their families and they are not always that way away from the family. How well they feel inside is how well they will do in school. They will not meet their potential without a feeling of equality, without dealing with their sense of inferiority or insecurity."

The following statement came from a young pediatrician, Alicia Gonzales M.D.:

"I noticed in my U.S. school that when you are dark skinned there is racism. Most people, little children, can't learn English very well when they feel prejudice against them. Like my little brother who is dark skinned, and the other boys laughed at him. Now he needs to learn English and he isn't making much effort.

"They must practice English outside school. They need more contact with American culture."

"Attitudes are basic, more important than understanding the

child's language." (Maria Gonzales, kindergarten teacher).

"Over there they have all sorts of ideas about respecting other cultures and the like, but I'm sort of old fashioned. If I go someplace I do what is done, I don't expect special treatment." (Richard Davis, businessman).

"In the States you show a lot of respect, everybody is an important person. If you use a bad word with someone you get reported to the boss. You have to treat some people differently. Children have to mind, it is the only way. In the States many times the teachers are a little bit afraid." (Delores Burrjillo, mother/housewife).

WHEN TO BEGIN ENGLISH INSTRUCTION:

Mexican parents appreciate special efforts to help their children learn English, but which program, which approach, do they prefer?

Only one person favored a bilingual United States. Maria Martinez, the John F. Kennedy school secretary, said:

"I think the States should accept Spanish and English as official languages, especially those areas close to Mexico where there are lots of Latin American people. If the schools really accepted the idea they would try their best."

It bears pointing out that the JFK school is completely bilingual. More than ninety percent of the students are Mexican, from homes that speak only Spanish. English instruction starts

in kindergarten. Beginning in grade one the instruction is half day English, half day Spanish. JFK school has operated an exchange program with students from the Culver City California Spanish Language Immersion Program.

Senorita Martinez stood alone with her position. Other respondents expressed a sense of urgency about the need to learn English in the United States.

The respondents agreed, with only a few exceptions, that you don't throw them off the pier, to sink or swim, (the submersion method). Neither do they approve of a school environment that creates an artificial all Spanish education experience. A large number of people referred to English as a Second Language Programs (ESL) as an appropriate strategy. It is the method used to teach English in Mexico. Mexican Institutos teach the first quarter using the ESL approach followed exclusively by the Immersion method to teach Spanish to non Spanish speakers.

"Divorce him from Spanish early, as young as possible. When you get older you can learn grammar and spelling from books, better than some native English speakers, but you don't learn the language." (Frank Bolek, businessman).

Richard Davis (quoted earlier) is an Engineer and American School trustee. He was born in the U.S. but has lived his entire life in Guadalajara. He said:

"American children who come here learn Spanish in no time at all, a matter of weeks; it depends on the exposure they have.

It is not a good idea to prolong the time they are in Spanish, you will get better results if you move them into English. Leaving them in Spanish is for comfort, not efficiency. In the French school they only use Spanish to introduce new vocabulary."

Carlos Gonzales is forty-five, sells pharmaceuticals, and a marathoner. He won a Pan American Games medal several years ago, and he ran in last year's Boston Marathon. This is his statement:

"School is the best place to learn new material and practice is the way to learn to speak. The best method is practice and the best motivator is necessity. You can learn a lot of English in three days and in three months you should be able to get by in English. I am offended that Mexican students would be kept in bilingual programs."

PARENTAL SUPPORT:

Many spoke to the important role parents play in encouraging children to practice their English. They know that many homes speak no English at all, but they had confidence that parents would help their children if the schools would make some effort to help the parents. Thirty percent made some comment about this.

Richard Davis had this advice to American school board members: "Meet with the parents and tell them this is for the advantage of their children. If you can, offer night classes to parents."

Felipe Delfin, a thirty-six year old international lawyer, said:

"People who go to the United States have to go to another country because they are not able to do well here, and when they go they may have something against the United States, and that is unfortunate. Convince them that they chose to go there and they have to accept their new way of life.

"Convince them to accept their new situation in a new country with a new language. Work with the parents because in Latin families the nuclear family is very close. We are accustomed to listening to our parents. If they are all the time telling them they are Mexican and not to forget their Spanish because someday they will go back to Mexico, then their children will avoid learning English.

"First, it is very interesting to know the way they think in Mexican families. Try to help these people accept their new situation. Help the parents to help their students. Talk with the parents and you will find their concerns, their problems. and along with them help them to find the answers. I know it is very difficult, because the American way of doing things and the Mexican way of doing things is very different."

"The fathers are important, if they don't speak English, their kids won't speak English. My uncle in Los Angeles doesn't speak English well, but he insists that my cousins speak English, and they speak it well." (Jose Luis Godinez, university student).

ENGLISH AND SPANISH LANGUAGE DIFFERENCES:

Victor Valdez is a teacher, linguist, and a court interpreter in five languages. He believes that English has become the dominant world language, not just because of economics, because it is comparatively easy to learn. "English syntax lacks the complexity of Spanish. English verbs have a maximum eight tenses ("to be" conjugated equals - be, being, been, am, are, is, was, were); most are four or five words ("to do" has five: does, did, done, doing; while "to work" has four: work, works, worked, working). Regular Spanish verbs have 45 forms, while irregular verbs have as many as 112 forms; and there are more than 5000 irregular verbs. The most irregular Spanish verb, "ir," means "to go."

Victor said the simplicity of English verbs is confusing to the Spanish speaker, it causes uncertainty. Reading and writing English poses different problems, English is orthographically irregular and difficult to read; Spanish is phonetic.

"Spanish is lyrical, even melodic, while English is not. English is technically precise, you can describe objects and phenomena extremely well, but it is difficult to describe "affect" as well. It is easier to communicate important subtle feelings in everyday Spanish: "Muchas gracias senorita" does not fully equal "Thank you ma'am," and "De nada Senor" does not equal "You're welcome sir." There is no way, in English, to explain the subtle difference. In English it's a business transaction, in Spanish it is a duet. When you place an order

with a good Mexican waiter he hesitates, ever so slightly for the briefest instant, as if he really is looking at you and privately assessing the appropriateness of your selection, before making his pronouncement..."perfecto senor." You actually get a "marvelous review" for your effort in selecting from a menu. It just can't be matched with English."

On the other hand, Spanish seems elliptical to many English speakers; "It's like you don't know what your really talking about," said one American.

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION:

What suggestions did these Mexicans have for our school's efforts to teach English to Mexican children?

"Everyday contact and practice in a group will take the least time compared with one on one. It is better to be in a regular situation speaking the language." (Cynthia Duque, teacher).

"English, not English and Spanish. Make them read and write in English." (Guadalupe Santana, teacher and bilingual secretary).

"The thing that helps me most in learning English is having to use it. The tone of voice is very important. If they know Spanish grammar they learn English better." (Delores Burrjillo, housewife).

"Everyday contact and practice in a group will take the least time compared with one on one. It is better to be in a regular situation speaking the language than to be in an institutional setting." (Cynthia Duque, teacher).

"Listen closely, tv helps a lot because you hear both sides of the conversation, and don't be afraid to try." (Adriana Ortiz, tenth grade student, went to grade eight in U.S.).

"More teachers and smaller groups." (Antonio Robaso, engineer).

"It takes awhile to understand, classmates and teachers make a difference." (Hernando Vasques, lawyer).

"I understand Mexican people speaking English better than I understand American people speaking English. Translate the vocabulary into English and have them memorize the vocabulary they are using." (Julieta Ortiz, music teacher).

"They have to learn it for survival. Find out the reasons they don't learn, and make it interesting to them." (Roberto Barbosa, businessman).

"I learned Spanish first and I think if you know your own language first you know how to think and organize your study." (Humberto Gallegos, dentist).

"The students must avoid Spanish. Make the students think quickly and answer quickly and don't give them a chance to think in Spanish." (Miguel Garcia, chemical engineer).

"The problem is they have too many Spanish speaking teachers, they know they can get by in Spanish and are not forced to speak English. Listen closely, tv helps a lot because you hear both sides of the conversation, and don't be afraid to try."
(Adrianna Ortiz, student).

"Translate the vocabulary into English and have them memorize the vocabulary they are using." (Julieta Ortiz, music teacher).

"Graphics help, my French teacher spoke not a word of Spanish but he drew, he made us learn with no Spanish at all."
(Alda Ortiz, housewife).

"I like to feel like a child in play, and the teacher would teach us words and we would form words by playing." (Luz Aguilar, housewife).

"Study English as if they (students of any age) were children." (Maria Cires, psychologist and English teacher).

"If you make a facility to teach them in Spanish they will not learn English. I think they have the ability to learn but the disposition is all important." (Felipe Delfin, lawyer).

"I have one teacher who makes you sit in one row until you pass the test, and I think that is a good way because you try to learn more. If they don't like it they should make them try to like it. They should make it like a race, competition." (Alfredo Sandoval, college student).

"They have to talk in English. Do not talk to them in Spanish. That was the problem with my youngest, they talked to him in Spanish and they should have talked with him in English. At the beginning it would be hard, but it would be better."
(Luluca Pier de Gonzales, housewife).

"It would have helped if I had more conversation." (Pablo Gonzales, student).

"In San Diego they had an ESL program that really helped me a lot. I was in it for a year and a half beginning at grade four. At six months I could get by with English. Olders want to translate everything exactly and it is wrong. Use ESL, don't be afraid to make mistakes. Give them essential English, things that are helpful. In the U.S. sometimes they teach the classes in Spanish and they think they are helping, and I think that is SO WRONG. Stay in English unless it is absolutely necessary." (Cladia. Hass, teacher).

"Teach them a basic English, or give them a book in Spanish that teaches them English. At age five or six they learn easily."
(Eduardo Llauses, student).

"Hire aides or something." (Veronica Munoz, high school student).

"My teachers didn't know Spanish, but they used a lot of mimicry and demonstrations that stuck with me." (Alva Gomez, teacher).

"I had to repeat first grade because they were trying to teach me in both English and Spanish at the same time. My best teacher always spoke English to me and she was very kind." (Maria Gonzales, teacher).

"Live the language, and remember that younger children learn faster because the hearing mechanisms are softer. Hearing becomes increasingly difficult with age because the bones harden. (Victor Valdez, translator and teacher).

"The best way is not to use Spanish. The teacher can explain an idea in different ways and using Spanish should be the last thing to use. (Raul Gomez, computer systems engineer).

"Practice only in English because they only speak Spanish at home and they forget. (Carlos Marin, lab technician).

"I learned English verbs here in Mexico and went to high school in Santa Anna. I liked it. The teachers said I was smart, I graduated, and went to beauty school there. (Elodia de la Torre, beautician).

"Language is learned over time. In the United States it is best to learn English immediately. Learn Spanish grammar first as a foundation for learning English." (Juana Hinajosa, housewife).

"Practice only in English because they only speak Spanish at home and they forget" (Carlos Marin, lab technician).

"I have had the experience of being a Mexican child who moved to the States and went to school. They need to begin with

basics, grammar and all that, a special course for three or four hours a day, and study hard." (Cladia Palacio, university student).

TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS:

"The teacher does not need to know a lot of Spanish, but some to help the students to feel comfortable, so that they know the teacher will help them in an emergency." (Rafael Burrillo, university student).

"A bilingual teacher is an auxiliary to be used only at the beginning for immediate help. Survival English is good enough at the beginning, but not enough to get by without any help. Keep them away from Spanish." (Victor Valdez, translator and teacher).

"Send them to the store to buy things. Speak English at home. My father was past thirty when he went to the U.S. and he learned English." (Guadalupe Santana, teacher).

"Have a counselor in the school who speaks Spanish so they have someone to tell their problems to, but the regular teacher should only speak English. If they speak Spanish they will practice it on the children." (Frank Bolek, businessman).

"The Mexican teachers knew the way we think and talk and they helped. I don't think a native English speaker is the best for us, I have always thought that. A Latin who speaks English is best for us. I was always motivated by good schools with good

teachers." (Eduwiges Elizande, teacher).

"I found the teachers who really wanted to teach you, not just translate for you, helped me a lot." (Carlos Mora, businessman).

"I don't think they need bilingual teachers. When you move to a country, adapt to that country." (Alva Gomez, teacher).

"I don't think it is necessary for the teacher to know Spanish, because they are learning English, not English and Spanish. I think it is more important that the teachers know the culture than the language, because we are not the same. Everything in the U.S. is different, there you don't even have to go to class. (Irma Martinez, teacher).

"It would help if teachers would learn enough Spanish to help when necessary, but not frequently. They could learn enough Spanish in six months to do this." (Oswald Eduardo Lopez, veterinary student).

"For me it was wonderful that the teacher knew no Spanish at all, but if you knew nothing at all about English it would be helpful if the teacher knew a little bit of Spanish." (Claudia Hernandez, bilingual secretary).

STUDENT EFFORT:

The Mexican citizens we interviewed were confident of Mexican children's ability to learn, but learning requires personal effort. They expressed disgust with adults and children

who do not try. They urge American teachers to encourage children's efforts with English, and do not avoid using English.

"If the people like to learn English, they can. Sometimes they don't like to change their customs and their language; the older people don't want to change and they influence the young people to be like them. It takes time because they are not always satisfied with their new life. The child does not always want to go to the States and they don't accept their father's solution for money. They would rather return to Mexico." (Carlos Marin, lab technician).

"Be in touch with American culture and the American life style. They live a Mexican life style and they have to break away from that." (Jorge Toro, biochemist).

"I don't get embarrassed when I say something wrong. At a very nice restaurant in Redding I asked for a towel when I wanted a napkin. They laughed, but it didn't bother me. Other people are embarrassed." (Jorge Haro, public relations man).

"Try to speak and make yourself understood by Americans." (Javier Hernandez, student).

"I had many friends in Santa Anna California that stayed in ESL just to continue speaking Spanish. These students had parents who did not speak English. They only watched channel 34." (Elodia de la Torre, beautician).

All responses to the question, "What suggestions do you have for U.S. schools to help Mexican students learn English?" were recorded and classified as follows:

Suggestion	#	%
use English only /immersion	32	25%
personal effort/being motivated	30	23%
practice/ speak & listen	25	19%
assoc with Engl & U.S. culture	21	18%
force them to speak English	20	15%
study/ go to school	17	13%
caring environment, caring teachers, & classmates/motivate them to learn	17	13%
use only English speaking tchrs	16	12%
avoid using Spanish	15	12%
translators/ ESL/ special help	15	12%
teachers could know Spanish/bilingual	14	11%
audio visual methods and books	14	11%
use English at home/ use parents	12	9%
get limited help frm Spn spkrs/aides	8	6%
use public media	7	5%
learn English grammar	4	3%
don't know	4	3%

The majority opinions were fully shared by the group's nineteen Mexican teachers, all are bilingual teachers, all experienced in English immersion programs. They have seen the results of their efforts and count themselves successful. The ESL approach to teaching English is quite large in Mexico, especially

in the universities and technical schools. A national ESL conference is held annually; it is a high quality conference, according to U.S. standards. The Mexican public school curriculum requires formal English instruction. This instruction teaches about the same amount of English to Mexicans as our public school Spanish courses teach Spanish to us.

HOW LONG TO LEARN ENGLISH:

How long will it take a student to learn enough English to get along in school?

"You can learn a lot in three days," according to Guillermo Gonzales, a Mexico City travel guide.

"Three months for "survival English," said Victor Valdez, "but that isn't enough for a child to get by in school without help."

"It depends on how much time they study. One hour a day, and it will take one and a half to two years." (Maria Cires, psychologist and English teacher).

"Without home support they still should learn English within a year." (Alva Gomez, Spanish teacher).

"The following is a tabulation of responses to the question:
 "How many months will it take a student to learn enough English
 to understand his English speaking teacher?":

# months to learn	# responding	# months to learn	# responding
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1	7	8	2
2	12	9	3
3	10	10	3
4	9	12	37
5	4	18	1
6	27	24	9

don't know = 5

average = 8.3 months

1 to 3 mo = 22%	4 to 6 mo = 31%	7 to 12 mo = 35%
over 12 mo = 8%	don't know = 4%	

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM RESPONDENTS:

COMMENTS ABOUT TEACHERS:

"My U.S. teacher helped me by being patient, and they had a little black girl, she was from Cuba, act as my translator. She was two years older than I was." (Alicia Gonzales M.D. pediatrician)

"I went to West Covina in junior high and spent three months in an ESL program, then transferred into the regular

program. I had learned enough in three months to get along, although some of the longer words were difficult. They did everything to help us in the ESL program. I went to the best. They have everything in U.S. schools, and it works, not like Mexico." (Carlos Santana, high school student).

"The schools in California are so nice, open for everyone, going to school was a nice experience." (Eduwiges Elizande).

"I moved to Chicago when I was three, and it was an accident that my father brought me back to Mexico when I was a young woman. Everything was so strange. They laughed at my poor Spanish. It was like my life had been broken in two. I felt I was American;" and then she cried. (Alicia Sendis, widow, age sixty-six).

WHY AND HOW THEY LEARN ENGLISH:

"English is not a nice language like French, but it is the most important language in the world." (Rafael Burrillo, university student).

"Life is not easy now and you have to try to be number one." (Instituto student, Javier Hernandez).

"Now my father earns everything. I must learn to look out for myself. I can't count on my brothers." (Graciella Trujillo, university education student).

"I went to LA in 1980, without papers, stayed six months. I tried to speak English but they made allowances." (Miguel Rojas, retail salesman).

MEXICAN STUDENTS LEARNING ENGLISH IN THE UNITED STATES:

"There are Spanish speakers in U.S. schools who don't care to learn English and they don't try." (Carlos Santana, high school student).

"They must practice English outside school. They need more contact with American culture." (Alicia Gonzales M.D. pediatrician).

"Be in touch with American culture and the American life style. They live a Mexican life style and they have to break away from that." (Jorge Toro, biochemist).

"First they should find out if they want to learn English and if they don't find out why. Help them to learn they will not give up their Mexican background." (Mauricio Flores, art student).

"There are so many Hispanics in Laredo that everything is done in Spanish. I had friends that went all the way through the Laredo public schools, twelve grades, and could not carry on an intelligent conversation in English." (Alicia Garza, Spanish teacher).

"Mexicans do not joke as they do in the States. Mexican jokes are different, more dumb." (Alejandro Burrjillo, high

school student).

PARENTS

"The problem is that no one speaks English at home. They don't practice it, parents don't help as much as they should. The parent should be motivated, let the kid know how important it is to learn English, even if they are going back home to Mexico." (Hernando Vasques, lawyer).

"Publicity to the homes and jobs (places of employment) to let them know how important it is to learn English." (Eduwiges Elizande, teacher).

"Talk to the fathers in the States and tell them the children have to learn English. The fathers feel they are inferior people. Mexicans think the education of the boys is the mothers responsibility." (Delores Burrjillo, housewife).